

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF CAREER, TECHNICAL, AND ADULT EDUCATION

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

English language learners (ELLs) are consistently a substantial portion of adults served in U.S. adult education programs. Forty percent of the students enrolled in program year 2012-13 were in English literacy classes, and 78 percent of those students were between the ages of 25 and 60. This fact sheet highlights the changes in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, or title II of WIOA, for ELLs.

Terms and Definitions.

- "English language learner" is defined as an adult or out of school youth "who has limited ability in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding of the English language, and whose native language is a language other than English; or who lives in a family or community environment where a language other than English is the dominant language." This term replaces the term "individual of limited English proficiency," which was used under the former law, the Workforce Investment Act.³
- "English language acquisition program" is defined as "a program of instruction designed to help eligible individuals who are English language learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language; and that leads to attainment of the secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and transition to postsecondary education and training; or employment." This term replaces the formerly used term English as a second language, or adult ESL.
- "Integrated English literacy and civics education" (IEL/CE) is defined as "education services provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, that enables such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, and may include workforce training." This expanded program codifies what had formerly been known as the English Literacy and Civics (EL/Civics) program. The Department will be issuing further guidance on new statutory requirements that apply to the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under WIOA throughout program year 2015.

State leadership. WIOA contains four required activities for state leadership activities. One requirement is "the establishment or operation of high quality professional development programs to improve the instruction provided pursuant to local activities required under Section 231(b)...and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs."⁷

What states must consider in funding local adult education programs. WIOA lists thirteen considerations states must use when selecting providers, including four that deal specifically with how such providers serve the instructional needs of ELLs:

¹ See program fact sheet at http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/factsh/english-literacy-education.pdf.

² Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 203(7).

³ Pub. L. 105-220, August 1998, Title II, Sec. 203(10).

⁴ Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 203(6).

⁵ Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 203(12).

⁶ Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 243.

⁷ Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 223(a)(1)(B).

- the degree to which they are "responsive to...serving individuals in the community...who are English language learners...";
- "whether the eligible providers' activities... are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate...";
- "whether the eligible provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship;" and,
- "whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs."8

National leadership activities. Among the allowable national leadership activities of particular relevance for ELLs, is the ability for the Department of Education to conduct activities that include "technical assistance...in distance education and promoting and improving the use of technology in the classroom, including instruction in English language acquisition for English language learners." Additionally, the Department may fund activities designed for "developing, replicating, and disseminating information on best practices and innovative programs, such as...the identification of effective strategies for working with adults with learning disabilities and with adults who are English language learners."10

ELA-related resources. OCTAE supports states in meeting these new WOIA requirements through the following:

- **Professional development** in effective instruction and programming for English language learners including self-access online courses, study circles, and in-person trainings is available through the LINCS web site and Regional Professional Development Centers.
- EL/Civics Online provides online courses to instructors and volunteers to assist in incorporating civics and citizenship content into their adult education classrooms.
- Research and promising practices in improving the integration of immigrants in communities, such as the Networks for Integrating New Americans' Theoretical Framework.

Additional Resources:

WIOA Resources are posted at: www.ed.gov/AEFLA

For questions, please email: AskAEFLA@ed.gov

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⁸ Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 231(e).

⁹ Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 242(c)(1)(B).

¹⁰ Pub. L. 113-128, July 2014, Title II, Sec. 242(c)(2)(c)(vii)(I).